

Running head: NIMS: THE ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND PROCEDURES

NIMS: The Roles, Responsibilities, and Procedures
for Local Government

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed _____
Robert M. Boyd Jr.

Abstract

An assessment revealed that NBFR and the City of New Bern's departments have failed to practice NIMS compliant requirements. The project's purpose was to identify specific roles, responsibilities, and procedures needed to support NIMS compliance within all levels of local government. Descriptive research methods clarified and reported the current understanding of NIMS compliance requirements. Procedures for determining answers to the project's four research questions included a review of literature, Internet queries, and questionnaires. Review of literature and Internet sources identified specific roles, responsibilities, and procedures in accordance to NIMS compliance. Questionnaire response from NBFR and the City of New Bern revealed significant differences in the relevance of NIMS between respondents that lacked experience and those that have experience in emergency response. Fire departments and municipalities identified actions that ensured everyone practices NIMS. Findings of others and information from this study confirmed that collaboration is essential to having participation in NIMS compliance. Unexpected findings determined the research problem was larger than originally perceived and a fallacy was found within current NIMS compliance standards. The push toward universal adoption of NIMS ICS without considering the small organization's ability to meet compliance standards has the potential to diminish the system's credibility. Recommendations include the adoption of a collaborative effort rather than forcing typical non-emergency personnel to participate in NIMS compliance. Leaders of the change effort must ensure everyone is involved in the components of NIMS. NBFR and the City of New Bern must become involved in NIMS compliance recommendations at the county, state, and federal level. Area leaders need to become advocates for changing the current standards into a standard that is achievable for the small organization.

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Introduction

In March 2004, the Secretary of Homeland Security, at the request of the President, released the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The intention of NIMS was to be a comprehensive system that improves response operations through the use of the Incident Command System (ICS) and the application of standardized roles, procedures and preparedness measures. The Homeland Security Presidential Directive-8 (HSPD-8) directed federal agencies to make NIMS adoption and implementation at the state and local levels a criterion for receiving federal preparedness funding (United States Department of Homeland Security [USDHS], 2006).

NIMS is a directive that establishes standardized incident management processes, protocols, and procedures that all responders will use to coordinate and conduct response actions (USDHS, 2006). Having the same standardized procedures will develop a common focus, which will place the full emphasis on incident management when a major incident occurs. In addition, national preparedness and readiness in responding to and recovering from an incident is enhanced since all of the Nation's emergency teams and authorities are using a common language and set of procedures (USDHS, 2008b). Recent natural and man-made disasters have brought a realization that there has to be a concerted effort to manage the magnitude of these incidents. One must understand that compliance for NIMS goes beyond the classroom setting. All stakeholders within the community must effectively unify their disciplines to attack a common problem (Bourne, 2005).

As defined in the Homeland Security Act of 2002, (USC 101 Sec. 2) the term "local government" means: "(A) county, municipality, city, town, township, local public authority, school district, special district, intrastate district, council of governments; regional or interstate government entity, or agency or instrumentality of a local government" (White House, 2002).

Authorities within local government are accountable for the primary responsibility for preventing, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and disasters. Research finds that a majority of emergency incidents are handled on a daily basis by local authorities. With the challenges facing the United States of America (USA), one must understand that large-scale disasters will strain the local government's capabilities (McEntire, 2007). Local government must become compliant with NIMS and overcome these challenges by working together through mutual support with other entities. NIMS compliance should be considered and undertaken as a community-wide effort. The benefit of NIMS compliance is most evident at the local level, when a community as a whole prepares for and provides an integrated response to an incident (USDHS, 2008b).

Implementation of NIMS compliance in every local jurisdiction establishes a baseline capability that once established nationwide, can be used as a foundation upon which more advanced homeland security capabilities can be built. Compliance with NIMS is much more than just a list of required elements. NIMS is new approach to the way emergency responders prepare for and manage incidents, one that will lead to a more effective utilization of resources and enhanced prevention, preparedness, and response capabilities. Once NIMS has been adopted, local government must begin to manage all emergency incidents and preplanned events in accordance with ICS organizational structures, doctrines, and procedures, as defined in NIMS (USDHS, 2008a)

Each year the City of New Bern hosts a large festival (preplanned event) that has approximately 80,000 people in attendance. The festival is a significant boost for the area's economy and many of the City's departments are intensely involved in the event. In 2006, New Bern Fire Rescue Department (NBFR) and the City of New Bern formally adopted NIMS in the

form of a proclamation. The adoption of NIMS resulted in the 2006 and 2007 implementation of the Incident Command System (ICS) as part of a planned event. The problem is lessons learned from an assessment of the festival's operations determined that many of the City's departments have failed to practice the NIMS compliant requirements. This noncompliance status has impeded the fire department's ability to unify their functions with other city disciplines during a major response event.

The purpose of this research is to identify specific roles, responsibilities, and procedures needed to support NIMS compliance at all levels of local government. Descriptive research methods will be used to clarify and report the present status of what is needed to correct the problem. Foundational research findings will be built upon answering the following questions: (a) what are the specific NIMS compliance requirements for the roles responsibilities, and procedures within local government, (b) what are the NIMS roles, responsibilities, and procedures that members of NBFR and the City of New Bern identified as being relevant to their department, (c) what actions have other fire departments and municipalities within North Carolina taken to ensure everyone practices their roles, responsibilities, and procedures in accordance to NIMS compliance, and (d) what are the roles, responsibilities, and procedures that NBFR and the City of New Bern need to implement to comply with NIMS?

Background and Significance

The City of New Bern is located approximately 30 miles from the coast of North Carolina. The City is mostly a suburban community covering approximately 28 square miles. According to the current census estimates, New Bern's population is approximately 28,650 people (United States Census Bureau, 2007). The City has a Council/Manager form of government that directs some 500 full-time and part-time employees.

North Carolina is unique to the East Coast in that the state extrudes into the Atlantic Ocean and is approximately 12 miles from the Gulf Stream. New Bern has an elevation of sea level with the Neuse and Trent rivers bordering the East and North sides of the city. Having these geographical characteristics make New Bern extremely vulnerable to hurricanes and flooding from Nor'easters.

The City of New Bern has experienced moderate growth due to an influx of retirement-age individuals. This growth has impacted the fire department's resource capabilities during a natural disaster. More and more homes are being built on rivers bordering the city. Many of the new inhabitants are from areas that are not prone to hurricanes and flooding, which affects the community's emergency preparedness.

NBFR is a combination department consisting of 75 career and 25 volunteer personnel. The fire department has three fire stations that respond to the City's corporate limits and offers mutual aid to the surrounding volunteer departments. Craven County, North Carolina has two municipal departments and 12 volunteer departments. As with many other departments around the United States, volunteer response numbers are very low during the day. NBFR does not have any formal agreements with other mutual aid fire departments.

There have been several hurricanes to affect New Bern over the past several years, including Hurricane Floyd. Up to this point, unified command has not been utilized in any of these hurricanes. New Bern's fire and police departments utilized separate command post when the agencies were working on incidents. Other agencies within local government failed to have any type of command structure. On several occasions NBFR would contact other agencies in an attempt to unify efforts failing to prevail. This has impacted the fire department's ability to function with other agencies within the jurisdiction.

According to NIMS, unified command links each agency to the incident and provides a forum for these entities to make consensus decisions. This allows various jurisdictions, agencies, and non-governmental responders to blend together throughout the operation to create an integrated team. Members of the unified command work together to develop a common set of incident objectives and strategies, share information, maximize the use of available resources, and enhance the efficiency of the individual response organizations. As a team, the Unified Command overcomes much of the inefficiency and duplication of effort that can occur when agencies from different functional and geographical jurisdictions operate without a common system or organizational framework (USDHS, 2008a).

When President Bush wrote the directive for NIMS compliance, NBFR was already practicing ICS during emergency responses. The plea from NBFR to have local government work towards compliance found many of the city's leaders reluctant to become involved with NIMS. In a proactive effort, one of the fire department's battalion commanders was sent to the State's Emergency Management Center to become qualified to teach NIMS classes. A matrix was developed to determine which classes were to be obtained within each level of responsibility.

In 2005, the City of New Bern formally adopted NIMS. Many of City's department heads were unwilling to accept the adoption into their individual divisions. This was very challenging and the city manager finally required all departments to participate in NIMS classes. In 2006, the City of New Bern employees were taught NIMS classes (i.e. IS700, IS800, ICS100, ICS200, ICS300 and ICS400) according to their level of hierarchy in the NIMS training matrix. NIMS training revealed negative comments from upper management that lacked a formal background in emergency response (T. Gaskins, personal communications, December 10, 2008). This

brought about confusion and questions about the relevance of NIMS. Negative comments were so evident that NBFR chose to bring in an outside instructor for NIMS ICS 300 and 400. This decision was chosen with the hopes of acceptance if someone from the outside was conveying the same message as the fire department's instructor (R. Aster, personal communications, December 10, 2008).

Observations during the NIMS training suggest that many of the City's leaders deem the ways emergencies have been handled in the past as being sufficient for today. In reality, other than having a few non-life-threatening hurricanes New Bern has not faced a large-scale emergency since 1999. Remarks during the class revealed that there is a failure to understand how NIMS compliance is applicable of the City's departments (T. Gaskins, personal communications, December 10, 2008). Many participants were found to have reservations about being forced to attend the classes.

New Bern's fire and police departments continually work under emergency conditions and understand the significance of being unified during a major incident. Information obtained from recent findings revealed that many of the city departments lack a true understanding of the theory and principles of ICS. Failure to practice the knowledge gained from NIMS training has blurred the City's perception towards accepting change. This has impacted the possibility for NIMS to be institutionalized within the local government.

The background for the problem was revealed in a lessons learned critique of the last two festivals held in New Bern. The planning committee for the events consisted of representatives from NBFR, New Bern Police Department (NBPD), public works, parks and recreation, electrical utilities, Emergency Medical Services, and the Swiss Bear group. All entities were invited to participate in developing an Incident Action Plan (IAP). The final product was

developed by NBFR and NBPD without any participation from the other representatives. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and a unified command were in place during the festival. Unfortunately, fire and police were the only organizations present in the EOC to function as unified command. The assessment exposed the lack of participation from other entities and that the local government is failing to comply with NIMS.

The importance of this research project is to clearly define the roles, responsibilities and procedures for NBFR and the entire City of New Bern to become NIMS compliant. This understanding of compliance by everyone will be a foundation upon which more advanced homeland security capabilities can be built. Working together and pooling resources will help NBFR and the entire community to implement NIMS. Compliance will ensure common and proven incident doctrines, practices, and principles are applied to local government's preparedness efforts. Continuance in NIMS practices will enhance the capability to integrate resources during an escalating incident (Bourne, 2005).

NBFR has been very fortunate to be awarded several grants from the government. Failure to be compliant with NIMS will end the opportunity to utilize this great funding source in the future. The impact from not understanding the roles, responsibilities, and procedures in accordance to NIMS is more profound than monetary awards. Research has shown that large-scale incidents will quickly overwhelm the local government's resources (Cohen & Hurson, 2002). Lack of unity towards NIMS compliance places New Bern's firefighters and the entire city at risk during any large disaster.

NIMS has expanded the roles and responsibilities within the first-responder community to include, among others, fire, police, hospital staff, public works/utility personnel, private owned business, skilled personnel, emergency management, and volunteer personnel (USDHS,

2008a). Additionally, first-line supervisors, middle management along with command and general staff are required to take more advanced levels of training to be considered NIMS compliant. Expanding the role of first responders to include typically non-emergency personnel indicates that compliance with NIMS training guidelines will be a challenge for local government (USDHS, 2007). The impact of this task is enormous in terms of logistical and economic resources required to complete this one component of NIMS compliance.

During a large-scale incident NBFR and the City of New Bern will have to strike a balance between meeting these new and increased responsibilities with everyday service demands. The ability to respond effectively to any emergency greatly depends on preparedness and having everyone competent with NIMS compliance. A hurricane or other types of disaster will quickly overwhelm or incapacitate New Bern's response capabilities, thus requiring coordinated assistance from outside of the affected area. The response and recovery capabilities during a catastrophic event differ significantly from those required to respond to and recover from a normal day-to-day type incident (McEntire, 2007). NBFR and the City of New Bern must understand that failure to understand this concept will impact the local government's preparedness for a disaster.

According to Sylves (2008), when the City of New Bern formally adopted NIMS the door was opened to the potential for civil litigation if the local government fails to meet the criteria set forth by the compliance matrix. Achieving NIMS compliance would be evidence that NBFR and the City of New Bern complied with nationally recognized regulatory standards and attempted to mitigate potential hazards to the community. Sylves also finds that an effort to adopt and implement nationally recognized standards towards effective mitigation would ultimately reduce exposures to legal claims. NIMS compliance improves life safety and

preservation of property, both of which become natural byproducts of legal protection (McEntire, 2007).

This research project has a direct relevance to the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management (EAFSOEM) course (United States Fire Administration [USFA], 2006). The intention of this training was to prepare senior staff officers to manage the operational component of a fire and rescue department effectively. Knowledge gained from this course brought about a realization that everyone must be familiar and competent in all functions of NIMS ICS. The class taught different roles, responsibilities and procedures that are significant to incident management during a major disaster. Material presented during the EAFSOEM class and findings of this research will strengthen NBFR and the City of New Bern's ability to assess risk, perform capability assessment, manage large incidents and integrate multi-agency operations.

Identifying the roles, responsibilities, and procedures for NIMS compliance has a correlation with the United States Fire Administration's (USFA) operational objectives. Understanding one's role and responsibility according to NIMS will better prepare NBFR and the local community to become leaders for reducing risk and saving lives. NIMS compliance will become a collaborative effort rather than each entity within local government having separate agendas. NIMS compliance encapsulates the goals of the USFA operational objectives through planning, preparedness, improving capability, and by providing a dynamic organization that can better function during extreme large-scale incidents (USFA, 2008).

Literature Review

The focus for this research project is to examine the roles, responsibilities, and procedures for complying with NIMS. NIMS is applicable to state, tribal and local governments,

private sector organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, nongovernmental organizations, and other organizations with an active role in emergency management and incident response. A basic premise of NIMS is that all incidents begin and end locally (USDHS, 2008a).

The main components of NIMS are preparedness, communications/information management, resource management, command/control management, and recovery. These components were not designed to stand alone, but to work together in a flexible, systematic manner to provide the national framework for incident management (USDHS, 2008b). Understanding the NIMS components helps to define the roles, responsibilities, and procedures in complying with NIMS.

HSPD-8 was developed to address issues related to preparedness, generally is conceptualized as an integrative and comprehensive process that is mainly concerned with training and equipping emergency response agencies (USDHS, 2008a). In mandating NIMS, the plan also institutionalizes the Incident Command System (ICS) as the preferred organizational structure for managing disasters for all levels of government and within all organizations that have a role in disaster response activities (Tierney, 2005).

Effective emergency management and incident response activities begin with a host of preparedness activities conducted on an ongoing basis in advance of any potential incident. Preparedness is an essential component within the process for becoming NIMS compliant. This component engages everyone within the community in a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action to maintain readiness to respond to emergencies (USDHS, 2007). While many of the community's constituents may not be heavily involved in all of the NIMS components, preparedness involves

everyone. Preparedness spans jurisdictions, governments, agencies and organizations.

Individuals' understanding their role in preparedness is pertinent if the emergency responders are to be NIMS compliant (USDHS, 2008a). Compliance specifically discusses the preparedness role for governments; organizations geared specifically toward preparedness, elected and appointed officials, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector.

Some of the compliance efforts can be found in the 2007 National Preparedness Guidelines (NPG). The purpose of the NPG is to organize and synchronize national efforts, guide total investment, incorporate lessons learned from past disasters, facilitate a capability-based and risk-based planning process, and to establish readiness metrics to evaluate progress. This enables the local government to have a system for assessing the overall preparedness capability to respond to major events, especially those involving acts of terrorism (USDHS, 2007).

NIMS requires a coordinated national effort involving every level of local government, as well as the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and individual citizens. Responsibility for preparedness falls on all stakeholders in advance of an incident (USDHS, 2008a). All entities within local government must be involved in coordinating preparedness within their jurisdictional borders, as well as across geographical borders when dictated by identified threats and risk assessments. Both local government and the community's stakeholders have a unique role in supporting the preparedness framework. This includes integrating the entire community into the planning process, providing necessary training, and credentialing of stakeholders. Leaders of local government are responsible for providing necessary resources, support for involvement in a joint response, and incorporating all organizations in training and exercises (USDHS, 2007). Local government is accountable for developing mechanisms that coordinates volunteers, goods, and services available through organizations within the community.

Community participation is significant in complying with NIMS preparedness. Participation by all stakeholders builds a structure and a process for ongoing collaboration for NIMS compliance (Lester, 2007).

Effective communications and information management provides a common depiction of the incident to all command and coordination sites during a major event. NIMS compliance requires a standardized framework for communications and emphasizes the need for a common operating picture. This component is based on the concepts of interoperability, reliability, scalability, and portability, as well as the resiliency and redundancy of communications and information (USDHS, 2008b). Interoperability between emergency responders has been a recognized need in the public safety network for years. Many hours of research and millions of dollars have been put towards giving emergency responders the ability to communicate with outside agencies (Weir, 2006). Despite numerous attempts to fix the problem from all levels of government, interoperability remains an elusive goal. In a 2006 survey of the National Governor's Association, Weir found 83% of state Homeland Security directors to identify that the number one priority in homeland security was developing interoperable communications for emergency responders. This survey revealed that a lack of interoperability remains one of the most critical and pressing issues facing the emergency response community today.

A majority of the nation's public safety entities have the freedom to make their own decisions regarding what equipment to buy, what technology to use, and what policies to implement (Weir, 2006). In many cases local government has sole authority to decide which other agencies they want to partner with to establish interoperability. The federal government has some power to set interoperability guidelines, but at the end of the day it is up to the states and local government to determine their level of interoperability (Sylves, 2008).

The federal government has made a good start at creating incremental improvements towards interoperability. There are still, however, many more actions that need to be improved. The leaders of local and state government need to have a collaborative effort when discussing interoperability (Kettl, 2006). Interoperability goes beyond the ability to communicate, if responders have not met each other, trained together, and hammered out command and control issues before a disaster, the fact they can talk to each other during a disaster will be meaningless (Sylves, 2008). Collaboration helps response agencies coordinate purchasing plans and make the purchasing decisions that best fulfill the combined goals (Koontz, 2004).

The private sector has been inadequately engaged in the efforts to accomplish interoperability (Weir, 2006). The federal government has been reluctant to encroach in to the workings of the open market, and the market has been slow in taking action to responders' demands for open standards. Now that open standards are becoming a reality, the federal government must encourage the private sector to be more closely aligned with the goals of its public safety agency consumers (Koontz, 2004). If the USDHS is going to require the private sector to be part of NIMS, then these same entities will need to become partners and invest in technology that brings interoperability (Carafano & Weitz, 2006). By encouraging involvement from the private sector through new solutions, the government will help increase the speed at which interoperability is pervasive in our nation. This type of partnership is already being researched in British Columbia (Weir, 2006).

The responsibility of local government is to continue efforts towards interoperability within communications and information management. This will entail many hours of planning efforts to find ways to help the federal government understand the differences within each community. Solutions for interoperability must continually to be researched and presented to

Congress. Every public safety agency will need to be involved in working towards interoperability. Common communication must exist between the incident commanders and each agency that is involved in the event (Koontz, 2004).

Local government's role is to ensure equipment, communication, and data interoperability is incorporated into the jurisdiction's acquisition programs. Leaders within the jurisdiction need to implement policies that standardize terminology, including the establishment of plain English communication standards across public safety. Within local government, fire, police, and all entities involved in NIMS will be responsible for developing standard operating procedures that correlate with decisions made by the community's leaders (Weir, 2006).

Resources (i.e. personnel, equipment, or supplies) are needed to support critical incident objectives. Resource management involves the coordination and oversight of tools, processes, and systems that provide incident commanders with the resources that they need during an incident. To assist local managers, NIMS includes standard procedures, methods, and functions in its resource management processes. The resource management component describes the procedures for ordering, mobilizing, dispatching, and tracking resources more efficiently (USDHS, 2007). Procedures must be implemented by all agencies to ensure the flow of resources is fluid and adaptable to the requirements of the incident. NIMS compliance defines standardized mechanisms and establishes the resource management process to identify requirements, order and acquire, mobilize, track and report, recover and demobilize, reimburse, and inventory resources (Walsh et al., 2005).

Each organization must appoint a resource manager that oversees the availability of assets provided by public, private, and volunteer organizations. Resource managers identify, refine, and validate resource requirements throughout the incident using a process that identifies

the needs of those involved in the incident (Walsh et al., 2005). Because resource requirements and availability will change as the incident evolves, all entities must coordinate closely beginning at the earliest possible point in the incident. Requests for items that the Incident Commander cannot obtain locally must be submitted through the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or Multi-agency Coordination Entity (MAC) using standardized ordering procedures (USDHS, 2008b). A resource manager uses established procedures to track resources continuously from mobilization through demobilization (USDHS, 2007).

NIMS compliance requires all entities within local government to type their resources to bring consistency across the country. Each agency and jurisdiction is responsible for categorizing their resources by measurable standards of capability and performance. Resource typing defines more precisely the resource capabilities needed to meet specific requirements, which allows the ability to facilitate frequent use and accuracy in obtaining resources (USDHS, 2008b).

NIMS compliance requires agencies and jurisdictions to have personnel that meet specific standards. Fire, police, public works, and other organizations are responsible for ensuring that all personnel possess a minimum level of training, experience, physical and medical fitness, or capability for the position they are tasked to fill. This brings consistency among personnel across agencies. Incident commanders do not have time to determine whether a person is qualified during the event. There needs to be an assurance that personnel requested are capable of fulfilling their functional task. (Walsh et al., 2005).

The command and management component of NIMS is designed to facilitate effective and efficient incident management and coordination by providing a flexible standardized incident management structure (USDHS, 2008a). Incident command is an idiom well known to the fire service, but has escaped the understanding of many political leaders and local authorities

over the past decades (Bourne, 2005). Changing this mindset began in March 2003 when the President mandated the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to establish a uniform set of processes and procedures that emergency responders at all levels of government will use to conduct response operations (White House, 2003). The concept of this mandate is to integrate effective practices into a comprehensive national framework for incident management.

Incorporating incident management practices into the jurisdiction's standard operating procedures enables responders within all levels of local government to work together more effectively. This allows agencies to manage incidents more efficiently no matter what the cause, size or complexity, including catastrophic acts of terrorism and disasters (USDHS, 2008a).

Continuous use is necessary to be competent in the roles, responsibilities, and procedures within NIMS. Every emergency service provider knows that responses are practiced and planned based on standard operating procedures and training. Most departments use some form of incident command, which has been part of the standard firefighting curriculum for over two decades (Bourne, 2005). The same level of inculcation must take place within all organizations to ensure NIMS is practiced during every training evolution and become second nature during an incident.

NIMS compliance within local government is more profound than ensuring that everyone has participated in classes. Recent findings show that intimidation is hindering the implementation of the NIMS Incident Command System (ICS). Buck, Trainor, and Aguire (2006) find in many cases that the cause for intimidation is attributed to a failure in understanding one's role and responsibility during an incident. Intimidation towards NIMS was found to be more prolific in non-emergency type agencies. Buck et al. also finds that this does not mean that these individuals do not want to use NIMS, but lack the understanding of how

compliance is applicable to one's role and responsibility. NIMS ICS describes incident management as a toolbox where one can select the components that guide consistency during the incident. Failure to have the entire jurisdiction fully understand how to utilize the components of ICS becomes a concern for firefighters who want to be compliant, effective, and part of the solution during a complex incident (Neal & Gaete, 2006).

Local government must redefine the concept of keeping their community safe. All of the city's departments or divisions must understand that the sole province of national security does not belong to the military or the federal government. Keeping the local community safe during large incidents is the responsibility of everyone within the community (Cohen & Hurson, 2002). Everyone must improve information sharing within the entire jurisdiction. This requires the development of systems and processes that communicate the roles, responsibilities and procedures within all levels of local government (Walsh, et al., 2005). The long-term goal of NIMS is to provide consistency for all aspects of emergency management and incident response. Consistency is obtained through training that meets the changing needs of the incident's environment (USDHS 2008b).

Lessons learned from previous major incidents reveal resource requirements during the emergency response mode will quickly tax the community's stamina (Tierney, 2005). The objective for NIMS is to have a self-efficient organization during the initial stages of a large incident. Inevitably, responsibility towards having homeland security rests primarily upon the states and local government (Walsh et al., 2005). All internal and external agencies within local government and the surrounding community must unify their resources to successfully overcome the obstacles presented during major incident. To efficiently handle the perils that face the community, training and competences building must become a priority by all (Buck et al., 2006).

The local community has the central role in providing public safety, civil defense, and public health (Cohen & Hurson, 2002). Through NIMS compliance and competency, communities will dramatically improve their ability to handle disasters or any large emergency through shared procedures and policies (USDHS, 2007).

Elected or appointed officials are responsible for ensuring the public safety and welfare of the people of that jurisdiction. Specifically, these officials provide strategic guidance and resources during preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Officials from each jurisdiction must have a clear understanding of one's role and responsibility for successful emergency management and response (Walsh et. al., 2005). Typically, the local official's day-to-day roles do not focus on emergency management and response. Roles change during a disaster, these same individuals or agencies will be required to provide direction and guidance to the jurisdiction's constituents. One's awareness of NIMS is critical to ensuring cooperative response efforts and minimizing the incident impacts (Hogan & Burstein, 2007).

Challenges can occur when the local government, private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and individual citizens collaborate for disaster preparedness (Bowen & Kearney, 2006). The best way to overcome challenges is to determine ways to develop capabilities for bolstering preparedness and achieving compliance with NIMS (Kettl, 2006). Most importantly, collaboration helps ensure that planners and program managers across the Nation use common tools and processes when planning, training, equipment, and other investments (Lester, 2007).

Each jurisdiction is responsible for expanding collaboration towards implementing NIMS, increasing interoperability, and increasing citizen preparedness capabilities. Collaboration among the community's stakeholders is critical to improving preparedness and achieving the tenets set forth in NIMS compliance (Reddick, 2008). Major events often have a

regional impact and all efforts towards NIMS compliance require extensive collaboration. The intent of collaboration is to identify geographic regions that work best for achieving and sustaining coordinated capabilities and mutual aid agreements (Lester, 2007).

The responsibility for responding to incidents, both natural and manmade, begins at the local level (McEntire, 2007). Though not formally part of emergency operations, individuals and households play an important role in the overall emergency management strategy (Tierney, 2005). The private sector's role within NIMS is to support community response, organize their business to ensure resiliency, and for protecting and restoring the area's critical infrastructure. Nongovernmental organizations (NGO) perform vital service missions and have the responsibility to assist individuals who have special needs, coordinate volunteers, assist with the management of donated goods, and interfacing with government response officials at all levels (USDHS, 2008b).

Training among community stakeholders is pertinent in becoming more agile and for ensuring organizational structures, process, and procedures that effectively support the intended strategic direction (McEntire, 2007). Training exercises provide the community with realistic hands-on learning and a chance to utilize lessons learned to correct any shortfalls found during the exercise. Lessons learned are an excellent way to improve the overall expectancy of being prepared for the real incident. Having stakeholders learn their roles, responsibilities and procedures will reduce uncertainty, expedite response, and improve effectiveness during the critical initial stages after an event. This effort is a key for success in protecting people and property in crisis (Walsh et al., 2005).

Uniformed emergency responders constitute less than one percent of the total United States population (Tierney, 2005). This makes the urgency of having the local community train

in their roles and responsibilities crucial during and after a catastrophic incident. Citizens can reduce the demand for emergency assistance during catastrophic incidents through being prepared and actively involved in NIMS (Lester, 2007). Maintaining policies and doctrines by community leaders in accordance with NIMS will ensure not only compliance but also having everyone competent in executing the requirements during an emergency (Yim & Caudle, 2004).

The community is accountable to one another and must ascertain their capability levels are known and improved through planning and guidance documents (Walsh et al., 2005). The local community must adopt a step-by-step capability preparedness process to ensure their priorities are in line with the National Priorities. The local government must define appropriate support roles for employees to perform as emergency staff to fulfill capabilities, and support the development and maintenance of an inventory of capabilities (USDHS, 2007).

As stated in HSPD-8, appropriate private sector entities are encouraged to incorporate the safety and security of people and assets into business plans and corporate strategies (USDHS, 2006). Recovery after an incident is an important part of NIMS and is similar to preparedness in that recovery involves everyone. The private sector should be involved in the same planning processes as other emergency providers. Infrastructure identification is normally a role and responsibility of the private sector. This becomes a great resource for incident management and recovery efforts during a disaster or large-scale event (USDHS, 2008a). A community's capability is defined as providing the means to accomplish a mission or function and to achieve desired outcomes under specified conditions (McEntire, 2007). As local entities make choices in preparedness and recovery programs, they will be able to improve their own preparedness, focus available assistance on areas of greatest need, and collaborate with others during the recovery process. Effective recovery is determined by effective preparedness (Walsh et. al., 2005).

Thus far the review of literature has focused on the proponent's view or findings. Much of the findings that support NIMS compliance come from a committee or commission that has written a plan intended to encapsulate the entire realm of emergency response. The concept of NIMS is new in comparison to the industry's time of existence. Research found dissimilarity in some of the author's findings in their research of NIMS. According to Frisina (2002), knowledge of a subject is constituted as the outcome of exhaustive inquiry. Findings of a particular situation by a particular inquiry are no guarantee that the settled conclusion will remain settled. This prompted the author to continue inquiries about NIMS in an effort to remove bias and seek true answers to the problem. The remaining portion of the literature review focused on an opponent's perspective of NIMS.

Research reveals NIMS has not been universally been accepted. Many organizations are still skeptical of the systems and claim layers of bureaucracy within NIMS impede the process of deploying resources to large-scale incidents (Nicholson, 2003). Incorporating all stakeholders within the community into the role of first responder presented a challenge of variance in experience and competence. Bea (2005) acknowledges that some communities and emergency response agencies have previously worked under management systems and are experienced with ICS, while others less experienced may struggle with NIMS.

Understanding one's role or responsibility is significant but is found to be only one part of the problem in complying with NIMS requirements. Some research critics question the wisdom of mandating one particular management framework for the many and diverse organizations that respond to disasters. According to emergency management policy experts Waugh and Streib (2006), ICS was created utilizing management concepts and theories that are now more than 30 years old and that current management theory places much less emphasis on

the command-and-control philosophy on which ICS is based. Waugh and Streib also note that ICS is far more compatible, both structurally and culturally, with command-oriented organizations like police and fire departments than with the structures and cultures of the many other types of agencies that have key roles in responding to disasters. Many critics view the top-down management models like ICS (and now NIMS) to be particularly ill suited to the distinctive challenges disasters present, which call for flexibility, improvisation, collaborative decision-making, and organizational adaptability (Lester, 2007).

A successful national strategy must recognize, embrace, and value the vast diversity that exists among state, tribal and local government agencies (McEntire, 2007). These agencies serve communities that have vastly different needs and expectations, and as a result, jurisdictions have developed capabilities that are tailored to their unique needs. Diversity among emergency response agencies reveals that current homeland security planning is neither appropriate, nor will it be successful (FEMA, 2009). The danger is that in mandating a single, standardized management approach that is familiar mainly to command-and-control agencies, the NRP will stifle the capacity to improvise and exclude many entities and groups that make can critical contributions during extreme events (Tierney, 2005).

The push toward universal adoption of NIMS ICS reflects the highly questionable assumption that once a consistent management structure is adopted, preparedness and response effectiveness will automatically improve (McEntire, 2007). Such an assumption ignores the numerous other factors that contribute to effective disaster management, such as ongoing contacts among agencies during non-disaster times, common understandings of community vulnerability and the likely consequences of extreme events, realistic training and exercises, and sound public education programs (Tierney, 2005).

Many state leaders have raised serious concerns over the implementation and requirements associated with NIMS compliance. There is a perception that NIMS is currently being implemented under a “one size fits all” methodology (Clovis, 2008a). This concept has the potential to diminish credibility of the doctrine and application to all jurisdictions. Local governments often are faced with tough budget situations and are normally funded through property taxes and fee systems for services (Caruson & MacManus, 2006). Many large metropolitan areas use local sales and income taxes to support government operations. The variety of taxes available to most small jurisdictions is limited, which leads to other difficulties when resources are stressed (Clovis, 2008b). Several of the states who reported the need for large staff increases did so based on the unknown impact NIMS compliance has on their state and the perception that small communities do not have the capacity to comply (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA], 2009).

According to Bea (2005), many emergency response units in rural areas depend upon volunteers or part-time employees to provide the necessary services to the. In order to receive federal funds and meet the NIMS compliance standards, some communities may impose requirements and duties on volunteer or part-time staff that might discourage them. Bea (2005) expresses concern that agencies in poor or rural areas lack the resources to reach NIMS compliance and are facing penalization with the loss of funds. Local leaders need to encourage congress to consider legislation to modify or help oversee the policy for changes (Bowman & Kearney, 2006). Bea also concludes the lack of preparedness presents a challenge and efforts to comply with NIMS have forced local jurisdictions to prioritize expenditures to enhance responder preparedness.

A study by the Council for Excellence in Government confirmed some the findings as other researchers. Many communities were found to believe that the average citizen has a role in promoting homeland security. Citizens also are willing to volunteer time to help keep the homeland secure. Obstacles towards NIMS compliance are due to lack of clear guidance in defining the appropriate level of preparedness and setting priorities to achieve it. The biggest problem was these same citizens did not understand NIMS and was unaware of any state and local plan for emergencies and terrorist attacks (Council, 2004). According to Bea (2005) some state and local government officials expressed concerns that the process was moving too fast. Local authorities recommend the implementation of NIMS compliance be slowed to allow local jurisdictions time to engage and stay active (FEMA, 2009).

Requirements for NIMS compliance at the local level were viewed as being unrealistic and unattainable. There is a concern about the overwhelming number of NIMS requirements and the ramifications of non-compliance through the loss of grant program funding (Clovis, 2008b). Many of the local jurisdictions fear current NIMS requirements encourage compliance on paper as opposed to a true operational compliance. According to many state leaders, federal authorities should use a graduated requirement system in which smaller communities and volunteer departments strive for an achievable level of capability and compliance (FEMA, 2009).

Many states are concerned with the efficacy of the current DHS Preparedness Analyst Program. As grant guidance becomes more complex, the states have become more reliant on their assigned preparedness analyst. The frequent turnover of preparedness analyst and the lack of knowledge or authority have hindered many organizations in receiving quality assistance. State and local leader are recommending that DHS assign preparedness analyst to the FEMA Regions and be placed in a technical role versus solely a monitoring role (FEMA, 2009).

State standards generally guide preparedness and training efforts at the non-federal level. The establishment of NIMS compliance standards will likely result in a reconsideration of the state standards, possibly their preemption, and an increase in costs associated with training and education. Such expectations will likely pose most difficult burdens on rural and poor communities with few resources (Bea, 2005).

Partnerships should be developed through a process of negotiation with the states regarding their unique risks, prioritization of needs, and achievement of capabilities. The emphasis of the partnership should be focused on multi-year planning and measurement of outcomes, thereby reducing risks rather than merely auditing equipment and funding (FEMA, 2009).

States are being inundated with requests and demands placed on them from a variety of sources at the national level without regional involvement (Bowman & Kearney, 2006). Most states indicated the FEMA regions should be given the appropriate authority and responsibility to manage all of the DHS/FEMS grants, including authority to make administrative and fiscal amendments. Providing this authority to the regions will ease the burden of having states interact with a host of DHS/FEMS program managers, as opposed to working with one regional office (FEMA, 2009).

Homeland security preparedness mandates from NIMS compliance place tremendous pressure on the finances of local governments and dictate intensified administrative oversight (Caruson & MacManus, 2006). In a national survey of American cities, there was evidence that resource capacity, budgetary constraints, and administrative capacity are tied to homeland security preparedness (Council, 2004). According to a survey of Florida's county and city government officials, the greatest impact of homeland security preparedness legislation on local

governments has been financial and administrative. The results from Caruson and MacManus findings show the environment that city managers face in NIMS compliance is restricted, with very limited resources.

The results from a survey of local government officials revealed the current process for sharing information as being ineffective. The reason for this failure was attributed to not routinely receiving pertinent information needed to protect the community. Information is not very useful, timely, accurate, or relevant, and the officials perceive the fight against terrorism to be generally a federal responsibility (Reddick, 2008). One of the most important lessons learned from the events of 9/11 is the importance of coordination among the governmental agencies and organizations that are responsible for disaster management (McEntire, 2007). Homeland security preparedness requires numerous federal, state, local, and private entities to be prepared to operate in close coordination to meet the threat and to mitigate its consequences (Wise & Nader, 2002).

Hurricane Katrina revealed a system that has not been consistent in practice with its rhetoric. Collaborative efforts towards NIMS compliance had not been sufficiently done prior to the disaster or even in the midst of the disaster. Inquiries into adequacy of authority and leadership failed and could not be worked out during the crisis (Lester & Krejci, 2007). Most experts agree that a more collaborative approach better fits the organizational culture of disaster response and reveals possibility for identifying the shortcomings of a hierarchically based command and control structure (Waugh & Streib, 2006).

Citizens frequently refrain from participating in governing decisions unless they are encouraged by others to do so. It is important for leaders of NIMS compliance understand that participation is motivated by mobilization efforts, not simply by individual will. Previous research on citizen participation in democratic governance and administration tells us that

citizens often choose not to be involved in governing decisions due to a limited knowledge of one's participatory activity (Vigoda, 2002).

For NIMS compliance to be successful, it must come from leadership. This is not only elected leadership, but also the professional leadership found in the disaster response community (Lester, 2007). This first step of commitment to towards NIMS compliance is a giant step, but can be achieved. Systems and organizations can change even in an evolutionary fashion if leadership takes the needed steps for transforming the stakeholder's concept of importance. The elected leadership has a responsibility before the people to provide for an emergency response system that is optimal (USDHS, 2008b). This keeps the issue for NIMS compliance thoroughly bound up in electoral politics. The disaster response professional has a responsibility to inform elected leadership as to what constitutes an optimal disaster response. The consensus among most professionals and scholars is that a collaborative system is the best form of response (Waugh and Streib 2006).

In summary, the review of literature provided information relevant to the roles, responsibilities, and procedures in complying with NIMS. Research discovered that compliance with NIMS is applicable to all agencies within local government and jurisdiction with an active role in emergency management and incident response. The four main components of NIMS were found to be preparedness, communications and information management, command and control, and resource management (USDHS, 2008a). Within each of these components one can define the roles, responsibilities, and procedures in complying with NIMS.

Effective incident and emergency management preparedness involves everyone within the community (McEntire, 2007). Leaders of the local government are responsible for providing necessary resources, support for involvement in a joint response, and incorporating all

organizations in training and exercises (USDHS, 2007). Local government's role is to ensure equipment, communication, and data interoperability is incorporated in acquisition programs (USDHS, 2007). Within the local government, fire, police, and all entities involved in NIMS will be responsible for developing policies that correlate with decisions made by the community's leaders (Yim & Caudle, 2004). Resource management involves the coordination and oversight of tools, processes, and systems that provide Incident Commanders with the resources that they need during an incident. To assist local managers, NIMS includes standard procedures, methods, and functions in its resource management processes (Walsh et al., 2005).

In mandating NIMS, the plan also institutionalizes the Incident Command System (ICS) as the preferred organizational structure for managing disasters for all levels of government and within all organizations that have a role in disaster response activities (USDHS, 2008a). NIMS compliance within the local government is much deeper than taking classes. NIMS ICS describes incident management as a toolbox where one can select the components that guide consistency during the incident (Walsh et al., 2005).

Recently there have been some findings that identified flaws in the efforts to implement NIMS compliance. A majority of the arguments were not specifically against NIMS, but there were significant concerns that justify more research. The push toward universal adoption of NIMS and ICS reflects the highly questionable assumption that once a consistent management structure is adopted, preparedness and response effectiveness will automatically improve (Buck et al., 2006). Such an assumption ignores the numerous other factors that contribute to effective disaster management, such as ongoing contacts among crisis-relevant agencies during non-disaster times, common understandings of community vulnerability and the likely consequences

of extreme events, realistic training and exercises, and sound public education programs (Tierney, 2005).

A similarity among the opponent's findings was the concern of not having a system that works for all emergency responders. According to Bea (2005) state and local government officials expressed concerns that the process was moving too fast and recommended local jurisdictions have more time to engage and stay active. Requirements for NIMS compliance at the local level were viewed as being unrealistic and unattainable. There is a concern about the overwhelming number of NIMS requirements and the ramifications of non-compliance through the loss of grant program funding (Caruson & MacManus, 2006). The danger in mandating a single, standardized management approach that is familiar mainly to command-and-control agencies is that the system will alienate many other organizations (Tierney, 2005).

Procedures

Research efforts involved reviewing numerous books, journals, reports, magazine articles, and Internet sources. The City of New Bern employees that participated in NIMS training were provided a questionnaire to determine the current understanding of compliance requirements. Questionnaires were sent to different fire departments in North Carolina by means of a shared email users group of Fire Chiefs. The objective for the research was to answer the four research questions and to identify solutions to the current problem facing NBFR and the City of New Bern.

The process for identifying pertinent information to the research problem began in November of 2008. The National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center (NFA LRC), the local library, and the Internet provided information to answer question number one. The focal point for research was to find specific NIMS compliance requirements for roles, responsibilities,

and procedures within local government. Finding information on specific compliance requirements for roles and responsibilities was limited, while procedures for NIMS compliance were found to be more accessible. To define the specifics for question number one, the author chose to research NIMS from conception to present. The author examined research from both the proponent's findings and from those that have identified discrepancies in the system's requirements. This path was chosen to allow an unbiased understanding of NIMS and to identify whether the problem chosen for this research was the right diagnosis or merely a symptom. The Department of Homeland Security's and the Lessons Learned Information Sharing websites provided many links for research of NIMS compliance. Inter-library loans, Internet queries, and the access to journals through the North Carolina Fire Chief's Association (NCFCA) contributed other author's research findings on NIMS.

The process began with developing a questionnaire in December of 2008. Preparation for the questionnaire included identifying the questions, level of detail, and a list of any probes needed to reveal pertinent information. The purpose for the questionnaire was to identify how each person interpreted the relevance of their position within NIMS compliance. The City's NIMS training matrix identifies the employees training expectancy according to a person's role and responsibility within the city. The target audience was selected from those that attended NIMS training. Participants included representatives from the City of New Bern's fire department, police department, public works, utilities, finance, parks and recreation, administration, and elected board.

Questionnaires were not intended to justify or quantify the responses. This segment of research utilized questionnaires to obtain information and views of NIMS compliance to help change the current level of participation. The perception of NBFR and the City of New Bern

employees when answering the questions were found to be significant in determining the answers to the research problem. Results from the questionnaire were intended to determine NBFR and the City of New Bern's current level of understanding NIMS.

Demographical and role specific questions were designed to identify an expectancy level according to the person's training requirements. Questions one, two, three, and six pertained to information given during the NIMS training. The objective for these questions was to draw a parallel from the participant's answers to the documented level of NIMS training. This study allowed the author to determine the current perception of NIMS compliance. Questions four and five were specifically designed to ask questions about the relevance of NIMS ICS in regards to the person's position within the city (copy of questionnaire found in Appendix A).

The questionnaire was sent via the City's interoffice email on January 10, 2009. The email explained the purpose of the research, the significance of their participation, and an opportunity to give a follow-up call (correspondence found in Appendix B). Response was very low in the beginning, so a reminder email was sent to reiterate the significance of their participation. A total of 56 questionnaires were sent with a total of 33 participants completing their questionnaires as of February 4, 2009.

The next segment of the project utilized a second questionnaire to answer the third research question. Again, the questionnaire was not intended to justify or quantify the responses. Rather, the questions were chosen to seek open and honest answers about each agency's efforts towards NIMS compliance. This research objective was to obtain information and views from fire departments within North Carolina. The responses from other jurisdictions were found to be significant in determining solutions to the research problem.

Preparation for the questionnaire began in January of 2009, the process included identifying the questions, level of detail, and a list of any probes needed to reveal pertinent information. Questions one through four were used to identify the demographics of each department and to allow for a separation of profiles. Questions five, six, and seven were used to identify NIMS specific answers. The objective for question eight was to identify obstacles other agencies have faced with implementing NIMS compliance. The last question was used to identify actions other fire departments and municipalities within North Carolina have taken to ensure everyone practices their roles, responsibilities, and procedures in accordance to NIMS compliance (questionnaire found in Appendix C).

The target audience was selected from representatives of fire departments and municipalities within North Carolina. The questionnaire was sent via email correspondence through the NCFCA on January 11, 2009. The email correspondence included an introduction, the research being conducted, and a clear description of the questionnaire's purpose (copy of email correspondence found in Appendix D). There were 68 correspondence sent with a total of 33 responses received as of February 6, 2009.

The last section of the research process utilized a review of literature and answers to the questionnaires from the previous research questions. Research began in December of 2008 and continued until February of 2009. The objective for the research was to identify the roles, responsibilities, and procedures that NBFR and the City of New Bern need to implement as required by NIMS. To obtain answers for the final question, research concentrated on other author's findings and the correlation to this research study.

The process utilized answers from the first research question to identify a base line compliance requirement for the specific roles, responsibilities, and procedures associated with

NIMS. The next step for research examined the responses from questionnaires that were sent to NBFR, the City of New Bern, and fire departments within North Carolina. Results from the questionnaires were used to identify pertinent information about the current view of relevance, major obstacles in obtaining compliance, and how to best implement NIMS.

An effort to identify a feasible strategy for implementation by NBFR and the City of New Bern was grounded in the literature review. Specific information for NBFR was discovered through questionnaires, interviews, and general institutional knowledge. Research identified specific roles, and responsibilities and procedures needed to support NIMS compliance at all levels of local government. The current status of NIMS compliance was clarified and information was obtained to make future recommendations.

A significant portion of the findings for this research was derived from other sources. Research findings from the review of literature are based on assumptions from other author's research and opinions. One can only assume that the available data was collected in an unbiased, honest, and accurate manner. This research provided wonderful concepts and information, but more time is needed to perform specific research on integrating NIMS into local government and to determine the evaluative measures significant to NBFR.

Limitations for this project were funding restraints, timeframe for research, and questionnaires utilizing a limited number of participants. Due to limited funding the process for implementing questionnaires was performed by internal sources. If more funds were available and time was not constrained, outside agencies could have been hired to provide statistical data from a larger geographical area. Questionnaires determined each person's perspective, but information was limited to personal knowledge of the NIMS compliance and the results are open to subjectivity. This researcher assumes the answers given on the questionnaires were forthright

and accurate. Extra time would have allowed more results from a larger geographical representation of stakeholders.

Access to organizations affected by NIMS compliance requirements severely limited research efforts and, as a result, programs and decision processes did not have the scrutiny necessary to assure accountability and effectiveness. Fortunately, since the latter part of 2008, research is increasingly finding its way into the major journals and government reports. The visibility of the research will hopefully stimulate even more interest and encourage even more research.

Several other limitations were noted in the research procedures. Questionnaires that determined the relevance of one's position were limited to NBFR and the City of New Bern's employees. More research needs to include county government, county fire departments, the private sector, and non-governmental agencies. A larger group would have verified whether the problem was localized or across the area. The questionnaire presented to fire departments throughout North Carolina again represents a limited number of participants. There is not any clear evidence that the answers provided by these questionnaires represent a correlation with other fire departments across the United States. More time and funding would have allowed the research to employ a true sample and provide statistical data.

Results

Results were obtained from the review of many written resources, questionnaire response from internal and external stakeholders, as well as the author's review of information from outside organizations. Research efforts found a considerable amount of information that answers the four research questions. Descriptive research methods identified the current status of the

problem and the solutions for implementing recommending changes to NBFR and the City of New Bern.

Research Question #1: What are the specific NIMS compliance requirements for the roles responsibilities, and procedures within local government?

Question one's results identified NIMS compliance requirements for the roles, responsibilities, and procedures within local government. The term local government is used throughout the results findings. For this research, local government has a direct connection to the project in that city and agencies are defined as being "local government" (White House, 2002). The research found compliance with NIMS to be applicable to local governments, private sector organizations, critical infrastructure owners, nongovernmental organizations and other organizations with an active role in emergency management and incident response. A basic premise of NIMS is that responsibility for incidents begin and end locally (USDHS, 2008).

NIMS components identified the roles, responsibilities, and procedures that are needed for implementing compliance. Preparedness was found to be an essential component for becoming NIMS compliant. Effective incident and emergency management preparedness involves everyone within the community (McEntire, 2007). While many of the community's constituents may not be heavily involved in all of the NIMS components, everyone has a role in preparedness. The preparedness component serves as a baseline that links all NIMS components (USDHS, 2008a).

Local government is responsible for ensuring the public safety and welfare of the people of their jurisdiction (USDHS, 2008a). Research determined that managers of each jurisdiction have the role of providing sound leadership and direction to the community. Local government officials are required by NIMS to provide strategic guidance and resources during emergency

preparedness, response, and recovery efforts (USDHS, 2008b). Elected and appointed officials may also be called upon to help formulate and reshape laws, policies, and budgets to aid preparedness efforts and to improve emergency management and incident response activities (Walsh et al., 2005).

The local emergency manager was found to have the day-to-day responsibility of overseeing emergency management programs and activities. NIMS compliance requires the emergency manager to work with the elected official to ensure that there are unified objectives with regard to the community's emergency response plans and activities (USDHS, 2008a). Responsibility for this position includes coordinating all aspects of a jurisdiction's mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities. The role of the emergency manager is to coordinate all components of NIMS for the community and identifying any shortfalls needed to improve (USDHS, 2007).

Department and agency heads were found to be responsible for collaborating with the emergency manager during the development of the local emergency operations plan and provide key emergency management resources (USDHS, 2008a). Participation in the planning process ensures that specific capabilities (i.e., firefighting, law enforcement, emergency medical services, and public works) and needs are integrated into a workable plan to safeguard the community (McEntire, 2007). The City's department and agency heads are required to develop and train personnel on internal policies and procedures that meet response and recovery needs. NIMS compliance requires department and agency heads to participate in interagency training and exercising to further develop and maintain the necessary capabilities (USDHS, 2008a).

According to NIMS compliance requirements, humanitarian and volunteer organizations should have a role in the local decision-making process. A review of literature found that NGOs

are responsible for providing relief services to sustain life, reduce physical and emotional distress, and promote the recovery of disaster victims. These groups collaborate with first responders, governments at all levels, and other agencies and organizations (USDHS, 2008a).

According to the requirement of NIMS, during the many facets of emergencies and disasters private-sector groups serve as partners with local government in emergency management (USDHS, 2007). The private sector is involved in critical aspects of emergency management and recovery to include critical infrastructure and utilities restoration. NIMS compliance requires the local government to form partnerships with these organizations and utilize their expertise during a disaster (USDHS, 2008a). Together, local government agencies and private-sector businesses form a response partnership. Communities cannot effectively respond to, or recover from, emergencies or disasters without strong cooperative relations with private-sector businesses (Walsh et al., 2005).

Although not formally a part of emergency management, research determined that individuals and families play an important role in the overall NIMS compliance process (Walsh et al., 2005). Community members contribute to the process of NIMS compliance by becoming part of a volunteer emergency response organization. The community is accountable to one another and must ascertain their capability levels are known and improved through planning and guidance documents (USDHS, 2008a). Uniformed emergency responders constitute less than one percent of the total United States population (Tierney, 2005). Citizens can reduce the demand for emergency assistance during catastrophic incidents through being prepared and actively involved in NIMS. Maintaining policies and doctrines by community leaders in accordance with NIMS will ensure not only compliance but also having everyone competent in executing the

requirements during an emergency. Members of local government are responsible for ensuring planning is collaborated with all stakeholders (Lester, 2007).

Research determined that in many cases local response agencies has sole authority to decide which other agencies they want to partner with to establish interoperability. The responsibility of the local government is to continue efforts to support interoperability (Koontz, 2004).

NIMS compliance requires local government to utilize the resource management component. The resource manager is responsible for ordering, mobilizing, dispatching, and tracking resources more efficiently. Results from this research determined that all entities within local government must type their resources to bring consistency across the country (USDHS, 2007).

Fire, police, public works, other community organizations were found to be responsible for ensuring that all personnel possess a minimum level of training, experience, physical and medical fitness, or capability for the position they are tasked to fill. This brings consistency among personnel across agencies. There needs to be an assurance that personnel requested are capable of fulfilling their functional task (Walsh et. al., 2005).

Research Question #2: What are the NIMS roles, responsibilities, and procedures that members of NBFR and the City of New Bern identified as being relevant, to their department?

The results from question number two were derived from a questionnaire sent to the City of New Bern's fire department, police department, public works, utilities, parks and recreations, finance, administration, and elected officials. Examination of the City's training matrix determined that participants were trained in NIMS classes according to one's position and responsibility. This allowed the research to clarify and report the present status of what is needed

correct the problem. Research identified how employees correlate the relevance of one's position to the requirements of NIMS compliance. Results from the questionnaires found significant differences in the responses between each department.

A total of 56 questionnaires were sent with a 59% (33 of 56) response. Response totals from the City of New Bern and NBFR were varied. Eighty-seven percent (20 of 23) of the participants from NBFR responded to the questionnaire. New Bern's police department response participation was 50% (5 of 10). Public works were sent six questionnaires with a 50% (3 of 6) response. Utilities had a 33% (1 of 3) participation in response to the questionnaires. Parks and recreation had 60% (3 of 5) participation in response to the questionnaire. Personnel from finance had 0% (0 of 3) participation. Three administrative personnel were asked to participate in the research with a 33% (1 of 3) response to the questionnaire. The study did not receive response from the elected officials (0 of 3) that were asked to respond to the questionnaire.

The first part of the questionnaire identified each respondent's role and position within local government. Results from this segment separated the respondents according to their level of NIMS training and position within the city. The first question provided a correlation between the training records and the participant's recollection of their level of NIMS training. According to the City's NIMS training matrix a total of 19 non-supervisory personnel have trained up to the level of NIMS ICS 200, another 22 supervisors/managers have trained in NIMS ICS 300, and a total of 15 managers and city officials have trained in NIMS ICS 400. The results from this segment of the questionnaire verified the training records were correctly documented for each respondent.

The objective for second question was to identify the number of people that have reviewed the NIMS compliance requirements for local government. Results determined that 61%

(20 of 33) of the respondents checked yes, 30% (10 of 33) checked no, and 9% (3 of 33) did not know. An examination of the responses revealed 90% (18 of 20) of the respondents that checked yes were from emergency response personnel. Respondents that checked no were found to be 50% (5 of 10) emergency response personnel and that another 50% (5 of 10) of the responses were from non-emergency personnel. Results determined that respondents that checked “did not know” represented 100% (3 of 3) the City’s park and recreation department.

Question number three identified NIMS compliance objectives each respondent saw as being applicable to local government. The results determined that four of the objectives had a higher percentage of selection than the other three. Objectives that had a lower selection percentage have a significant correlation to the research problem. An examination of the response selection revealed that personnel from NBFR selected all seven of the objectives and that the remainder of the City of New Bern employees randomly selected the objectives. The only objective that had 100% response was the “adopt NIMS by ordinance” (see Table 1).

Table 1

NIMS compliance objectives applicable to local government

Objectives	Response Percentage
Adopt NIMS by ordinance	100%
Develop a compliance strategy for implementing NIMS	25%
Define roles and responsibility for community	10%
Conduct an assessment to determine status of compliance	5%
Update the local Emergency Management Plan	80%
Establish Mutual Aid Agreements with neighboring entities	90%
Integrate NIMS into all exercises and training	75%

Question number four asked the respondents to describe the roles, responsibilities, and procedures that are relevant to one's position or department in becoming NIMS compliance. The objective was to determine NBFR and the City of New Bern's current understanding of one's position within the NIMS compliance requirements. This segment of the NIMS questionnaire found that a majority failed to understand the relevance of one's position in becoming NIMS compliant. Results determined that 24% (8 of 33) to answer the question correctly and that 76% (25 of 33) were found to answer did not know or failed to answer the question. Respondents that answered the question correctly were found to be from employees that have experience in NIMS. This segment of the study revealed the need for more research to determine the reason for this lack of understanding.

Question number five described the respondent's role and position during a large-scale event in accordance to NIMS ICS. The objective for this section of the questionnaire was to identify whether experience in ICS made a difference. An examination of the responses determined that experience in NIMS ICS made a difference in the answers to the question. Results identified that 55% (18 of 33) of the responses to correctly identify the person's role and responsibility during a large-scale event. Twenty-one percent (7 of 33) of the respondents answered the question incorrectly and that 24% (8 of 33) stated they did not know their role or responsibility in accordance to NIMS ICS. Respondents with experience in ICS represented 61% (20 of 33) and respondents that lacked experience represented 39% (13 of 33) of the total response. The final results determined that 90% (18 of 20) of experienced personnel answered correctly, while 100% of the respondents with no experience answered incorrectly or did not know the answer.

Question number six asked the respondents to identify any and all entities that should be part of NIMS compliance within the local community. This segment of the questionnaire determined that a majority of the respondents identified emergency responders and other entities typically involved in disasters to be responsible for NIMS compliance. This verifies that NBFR and the City of New Bern have failed to integrate all entities into efforts towards NIMS compliance. Results from the question can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Entities responsible to be part of NIMS compliance

Entity	Response percentage
Fire Department	100% (33 of 33)
Emergency Medical Service	100% (33 of 33)
Law Enforcement	100% (33 of 33)
Elected officials	39% (13 of 33)
City department leaders	30% (10 of 33)
Emergency management	100% (33 of 33)
Schools	45% (15 of 33)
Hospitals	91% (30 of 33)
Health department	91% (30 of 33)
Local citizen	9% (3 of 33)
Private sector (i.e. contractors, vendors)	18% (6 of 33)
Non-governmental Organizations (i.e. Red Cross, Churches)	76% (25 of 33)

Research Question #3: What actions have other fire departments and municipalities within North Carolina taken to ensure everyone practices their roles, responsibilities, and procedures in accordance to NIMS compliance?

The intention of the questionnaire was to identify actions that other fire departments and municipalities within North Carolina have taken to ensure everyone practices their roles, responsibilities, and procedures in accordance to NIMS compliance. Initially, 68 questionnaires were sent via the North Carolina's Fire Chief Association's email user group. Further investigation revealed 16 of the 68 questionnaires were found to be redundant. Many of the larger fire departments have several personnel that participate in the user group. The final tabulation for responses received versus questionnaires sent was 58% (30 of 52).

Questions one through four of the questionnaire identified each of the respondent's demographical information. Results from this segment separated each respondent according to their demographical profile (found in Appendix F). The objective for question number five was to identify the number of people that have reviewed the NIMS compliance requirements for local government. Results determined that 84% (25 of 30) checked yes, 13% (4 of 30) checked no, and 3% (1 of 30) did not know.

The objective for question number six was to determine the number of NIMS compliance objectives that each agency or jurisdiction identified as being completed. Results determined that fire departments within North Carolina have obtained a majority of the compliance objectives. Answers to the question found that "defining the agency and jurisdiction's role and responsibility" and "conducting an assessment to determine their status of compliance" to be well below the other NIMS compliance objectives. This confirmed that other agencies and jurisdictions within North Carolina are facing similar challenges with NIMS compliance

requirements. Similarities were found between the response from other agencies and this project's research problem. Many of the fire departments have failed to define the agency or jurisdiction's role and responsibility for NIMS compliance. Results found in Table 3 reflect the percentage of respondents that chose each of the objectives.

Table 3

NIMS compliance objectives that each agency or jurisdiction identified

Objectives	Response	
Adopted NIMS by ordinance	Yes <u>100%</u>	No <u>0</u>
Developed a compliance strategy for implementing NIMS	Yes <u>80%</u>	No <u>20%</u>
Defined roles and responsibility for agency and jurisdiction	Yes <u>30%</u>	No <u>70%</u>
Conducted an assessment to determine status of compliance	Yes <u>40%</u>	No <u>60%</u>
Updated the local Emergency Management Plan	Yes <u>90%</u>	No <u>10%</u>
Established Mutual Aid Agreements with neighboring entities	Yes <u>83%</u>	No <u>17%</u>
Integrated NIMS into all exercises and training	Yes <u>60%</u>	No <u>40%</u>

Question number seven identified the current level of NIMS training that each respondent's agency and jurisdiction has received. Results determined that emergency response agencies have been trained in NIMS classes and that other agencies within each of the respondent's jurisdiction have either failed to train in NIMS or have minimal levels (results found in Table 4). Similarities were found in the level of NIMS training that each of the fire departments has participated in. Smaller fire departments were found to have received lower levels of training and larger departments were found to have completed all of the NIMS required classes. Another finding was that many agencies failed to know the level of NIMS training their jurisdiction had completed. This finding verifies that other jurisdictions are failing to have a

collaborative effort towards having local government compliant with NIMS. More research is needed to determine the reason for this lack of knowledge.

Table 4

NIMS compliance training classes each agency/jurisdiction identified as being completed

Agency/Jurisdiction	700	800	100	200	300	400	None	Don't Know	Total
Fire Department				10%	10%	80%			100%
Law Enforcement	50%		10%	10%		10%		20%	100%
Emergency Medical Service	10%	10%					40%	40%	100%
Public Works/Utilities	10%						10%	80%	100%
City/County Administration		17%					33%	50%	100%
Elected Officials		13%					20%	77%	100%

Question number eight identified obstacles the respondent's agency or jurisdiction encountered while implementing NIMS compliance. Results from the question determined that 43% (13 of 30) of the respondents identified inexperience in utilizing ICS and the lack of leadership as being obstacles for ensuring everyone practices the roles, responsibilities, and procedures for complying with NIMS. Another 30% (9 of 30) identified that failure to have clear guidance from local, state and federal emergency managers as being the largest obstacle implementing NIMS compliance. Examination of the responses found that 27% (8 of 30) of the fire departments did not answer the question.

Question number nine identified solutions that each agency or jurisdiction utilized in overcoming obstacles identified in question eight. Response determined that 62% (8 of 13) of the respondents that identified lack of leadership and participation to have an answer to question

nine. Fire departments found that role play training exercises and that persistence from the stakeholders to be the solutions for the agency or jurisdiction's obstacle. Results found that 87% (8 of 9) of the fire departments that identified failure to have clear guidance to provide responses to question nine. Response from the question determined that involvement by local leaders in state emergency management decisions has helped to clarify some of the compliance requirements.

Research Question #4: What are the roles, responsibilities, and procedures that NBFR and the City of New Bern need to implement in accordance with NIMS compliance?

The results from question four were derived from the results of question number one and the questionnaires. The literature review provided resources that identified areas where NBFR and the City of New Bern were lacking according to NIMS. The questionnaires provided pertinent information on the relevance of NIMS and identified obstacles for compliance.

The results from this part of the research concluded that NBFR and the City of New Bern are lacking in many areas. The results from the questionnaire utilized in research question number two identified that NBFR has a grasp on the department's role and responsibility towards meeting NIMS compliance. The remainder of the city is still struggling with the NIMS compliance requirements. Research determined that the City of New Bern has been forced to attend NIMS training. Requirement to participate has reduced a "buy in" from personnel not typically affiliated with emergency response.

Similarities were found in the questionnaire response from NBFR, the City of New Bern, and fire departments across North Carolina. These similarities included failure to have participation from personnel that lack experience in emergency response and the failure to clearly understand one's role and responsibility. In conclusion, the results from the research

determined that everyone has failed to implement their roles, responsibilities, and procedures in accordance with NIMS compliance. This author further determined that NBFR and the City of New Bern were provided the knowledge for implementation but lacked a method for assuring understanding. A review of literature determined that NBFR and the City of New Bern have failed to collaborate in the efforts toward complying with NIMS. Collaboration was found to be a significant element in assuring NBFR and the City of New Bern are NIMS compliance. Research shows the consequences of these actions will in turn develop competence and remove misconceptions of NIMS.

In summary, the results from this research has expanded this author's knowledge of NIMS compliance and provided numerous recommendations for those who study or work in emergency management. Research identified the roles and responsibilities that NBFR and the City of New Bern's need to implement for NIMS compliance. Results from a review of literature verified that local government is accountable for ensuring everyone understands the procedures for NIMS compliance. One significant finding from the research was the failure to have collaboration among the different agencies within the City of New Bern and other jurisdictions across North Carolina.

Research provided many unexpected findings regarding NIMS compliance requirements. This author found information that verifies the significance of NIMS, but reveals problems with the compliance requirements. Research revealed that NIMS is new to many agencies that have little experience in ICS. Though NIMS is a good concept research found that government decisions for compliance are driven by interest groups that are represented by either large metro departments or from people that lack true experience in emergency management. These interests often behave as political pressure groups that work to advance their interest in bureaucratic

competitions (McEntire, 2007). Obstacles towards NIMS compliance were found to be due to lack of clear guidance in defining the appropriate level of preparedness and setting priorities to achieve it (Reddick, 2008).

Research findings from Waugh and Streib (2006) determined that NIMS compliance has demanded broad-ranging local conformity to federal disaster planning and response. Local officials have determined that these plans are turning into a program that punishes those incapable of the compliance requirements (FEMA, 2009). An examination of literature finds that many State leaders have raised serious concerns over the implementation and requirements associated with NIMS compliance. Local government was found to be directly involved in emergency management, but most public officials have traditionally had little or no experience or interest in emergency management. This is confirmed in the findings from the questionnaire responses provided by NBFR, the City of New Bern, and fire departments across North Carolina.

Discussion

Research findings in the literature review supported the significance of specific roles, responsibilities, and procedures needed to support NIMS compliance at all levels of local government. Similarities and differences were found between the results of this study and the findings of other author's research. The term "local government" was found to include both NBFR and all agencies within the City of New Bern as being required to be NIMS compliant (White House, 2002).

The literature review identified many components of NIMS compliance. Each of these components decides one's role and responsibility according to their level of involvement in the NIMS compliance procedures. Preparedness was found to be a key component of NIMS compliance in that every level of local government, as well as the private sector,

nongovernmental organizations, and individual citizens has involvement in preparedness (USDHS, 2008a). Responsibility for preparedness must become a proprietary effort by everyone within the community in advance of a major incident (USDHS, 2007). The results from this study determined that New Bern's leaders have failed to be involved in coordinating preparedness within the jurisdictional borders. Both NBFR and the community stakeholders have a unique role in supporting emergency response preparedness. This includes integrating the entire community into the planning process, providing necessary training, and the credentialing of stakeholders (USDHS, 2008a). NBFR and the City of New Bern's leaders are responsible for providing necessary resources and incorporating all organizations in training and exercises. Community preparedness and participation is significant in building a structure and a process for ongoing collaboration (Walsh et. al., 2005).

Continuous use by NBFR and the City of New Bern is necessary for having competence in the roles, responsibilities, and procedures within NIMS. Every emergency service provider knows that responses are practiced and planned based on standard operating procedures and training (Walsh et al., 2005). An examination of the project's findings determined that most fire departments use some form of Incident Command, which has been part of the standard firefighting curriculum for over two decades (Bourne, 2005). Research revealed that NBFR and other agencies must utilize the same level of inculcation in the practices of NIMS during every training evolution and become second nature during an incident. Results from this study confirmed NBFR and the City of New Bern have failed to utilize the knowledge gained in NIMS training. The local government has not participated in any type of unified command, IAP development, or training exercise.

Research shows intimidation is hindering the implementation of the NIMS Incident Command System (NIMS ICS). Agencies that are normally associated with emergency response have the perception of being coerced into NIMS compliance. Buck et al. (2006), finds in many cases that intimidation is attributed to a failure in understanding one's role and responsibility during an incident. Many individuals lack the understanding of how NIMS compliance is applicable to one's role and responsibility (Buck et al., 2006). Similarities to these findings were found in the responses to the questionnaires and from personal communications with the fire department's NIMS instructor. Results from questionnaires sent to NBFR personnel and the fire departments across North Carolina determined that emergency personnel provided the highest response percentage and were found to answer specific questions on NIMS. Respondents that did not respond to the questionnaires or left many of the questions blank were from agencies that are not typically associated with emergency response. Personal communications determined that city employees were forced to attend NIMS classes. Results from this study recognized a correlation between the employees forced to attend NIMS and the ones that were reluctant to accept NIMS. Comments made during the NIMS training questioned the application of NIMS to the person's position in the city.

Research revealed that NIMS has not universally been accepted (Clovis, 2008a). This was found true in the questionnaires provided to NBFR, the City of New Bern, and fire departments across North Carolina. Many of the agencies affiliated with the study have failed to accept the terms of NIMS ICS. Failure to fully understand how to use the NIMS ICS components by local government becomes a concern for firefighters who want to be compliant, effective, and part of the solution in complex incident management (Neal & Gaete, 2006).

With the incorporation of local government into the role of first responder has presented a challenge due to variances in experience and competence. Bea (2005) acknowledges that some communities and emergency response agencies have previously worked under management systems that are experienced with ICS, while others with less experience may struggle with NIMS. Similarities were found in the examination of questionnaire response provided by participants in this study. Employees that lacked experience in emergency response did not understand NIMS ICS, even though all of the respondents had received NIMS ICS training. NBFR and some of the police department answered the specific questions about incident command, while the remainder of the City's employees either did not answer the question or failed to understand the system. Results from the questionnaire sent to fire departments across North Carolina confirmed Bea's findings. Many of the respondents identified inexperience in utilizing ICS as being a major obstacle for ensuring everyone practices the roles, responsibilities, and procedures for complying with NIMS.

Homeland security preparedness mandates from NIMS compliance is placing tremendous pressure on the finances of local governments and dictate intensified administrative oversight (Caruson & MacManus, 2006). Many researchers are finding that local government and community leaders from around the United States are concerned with the current NIMS compliance process. According to Bea (2005) some state and local government officials expressed concerns that the process was moving too fast. Local authorities are recommending that the implementation of NIMS compliance allow local jurisdictions time to engage and stay active in training. Bea also finds that requirements for NIMS compliance at the local level are being viewed as being unrealistic and unattainable. There is a concern about the overwhelming number of NIMS requirements and the ramifications of non-compliance through the loss of grant

program funding. Many of the local jurisdictions fear the current NIMS standards encourage compliance on paper as opposed to a true compliance. According to many state leaders, federal authorities should use a graduated requirement system in which smaller communities and volunteer departments strive for an achievable level of capability and compliance (FEMA, 2009).

Results from this study determined that many of the respondents utilize volunteers within their organization. NBFR and 25 of the 30 respondents that participated in the questionnaire were found to be either combination or all volunteer fire departments. Information from a review of literature determined that organizations are being affected by the current NIMS compliance requirements. One of the problems found with NIMS compliance is the failure to recognize that communities vary widely and are not necessarily equal (FEMA, 2009). Respondents that were from larger more populated areas were found to have a better understanding of NIMS compliance. Many emergency response units in rural areas depend upon volunteers or part-time employees to provide the necessary services on emergency medical squads, fire department staffs, or other public safety units. There is a concern that agencies in poor or rural areas lack the resources to reach NIMS compliance and are facing penalization with the loss of funds (Bea, 2005). In order to receive federal funds and meet the NIMS compliance standards will require agencies to impose more responsibility on volunteer or part-time staff. There is a concern about the overwhelming number of NIMS requirements and the ramifications of non-compliance through the loss of grant program funding (Caruson & MacManus, 2006). The danger in mandating a single, standardized management approach without considering the ramifications of NIMS compliance requirements will alienate many other organizations (Tierney, 2005).

This author is of the opinion that leadership is a key component in ensuring a successful NIMS compliance effort. This is not only elected leadership, but also the professional leadership

found in the disaster response community. According to the results of this study elected officials are failing to be part of NIMS compliance. One of the problems identified in this paper is the lack of communication between the elected officials and the disaster response professional. The disaster response professional has a responsibility to inform elected leadership as to what constitutes an optimal disaster response and the elected leadership has a responsibility before the people to provide for an emergency response system that is optimal. The consensus among most professionals and scholars is that a collaborative system is the best form of response (Waugh and Streib 2006). Results from this study identified leadership as being an obstacle towards implementing NIMS. Failing to have collaboration in efforts towards NIMS compliance was found to be a link in why compliance is not being met in local government.

Results from the literature review and questionnaires have brought about a realization that the research problem is more profound than originally thought. Research revealed the importance of having NBFR and the City of New Bern knowing their roles and responsibilities as part of NIMS compliance. This knowledge will be a great leap for NBFR and the implications for this effort will enable New Bern's community to be better prepared during a major disaster. Further efforts towards having participation in NIMS ICS will enhance the fire department's ability to unify their functions with other city disciplines during a major response event. Current findings do not elude the fact that NBFR must continue to push forward in NIMS compliance. There may be negative repercussions if NBFR and the City of New Bern do not take these issues seriously and not research NIMS compliance requirements more thoroughly.

Though significant, this author is concerned that understanding one's role and responsibility is not enough. Many issues were discovered from the literature review and questionnaires that verified the current requirements are failing to encapsulate the diversity of

agencies throughout the industry. Evidence revealed from the literature and the study's results that small agencies are facing many challenges in complying with NIMS. Findings from this research failed to provide enough results to verify the implications of NIMS within larger agencies.

Recommendations

Knowledge obtained from this research has the potential to make a significant impact on NBFR and the City of New Bern. Incorporating concepts revealed in the research findings will grant an opportunity to have the fire department and local government understand their roles, responsibilities, and procedures in accordance to NIMS compliance. Identifying the answers to the research problem has been accomplished along with recommendations for improving the NIMS process. Results obtained from literature review and questionnaires confirm that collaboration efforts will empower all stakeholders to be better prepared during a major incident.

Results from the research revealed a fallacy towards NIMS among those that lack experience in emergency response. NBFR and a small number of New Bern's police department employees were found to have a better understanding of their roles, and responsibilities towards complying with NIMS. Results from those that responded to the questionnaires revealed significant difference among the respondents. The author identified a connection between the ones that did not respond to questionnaire with those that failed to participate in the unified command. Further investigation of the research findings determined that employees being forced to attend the NIMS training were reluctant to accept NIMS.

The fallacy towards NIMS was determined to be a failure to go from knowledge to understanding. Knowledge is the resource to solve a problem or issue, while understanding is the ability to use the resource to solve it. This research paper and the NIMS classes have provided

the knowledge of the roles, responsibilities, and procedures. To help reduce the fallacy this author recommends NBFR and the City of New Bern implement a systematic change effort towards solving the problem.

The first step in this recommendation is to adopt a collaborative effort over forcing personnel to participate. A collaborative effort towards change must include NBFR and the City of New Bern employees, along with a respect for each person's realm of responsibility. Leaders of the change effort must allow the results of collaboration to be implemented even if this means that authority has become more diffused. The temptation to maintain control must be tempered.

Systemic change will be difficult and it will require a fundamental redirection of the way things have transformed since adopting NIMS. There must be a desire for change that leads to a systemic transformation. Second, there must be an organizational structure that can lead to systemic transformation. A basic question of what type of change is necessary and must be solved before moving forward. At present, the status quo seems to be the rule of the day and must be seen as being in need of reform. The leadership of NBFR and the city must put forward a vision of collaborative leadership. In disaster management, it would not be unreasonable to suggest a basic vision of achieving optimal disaster response by allowing all relevant actors to collaborate on how best to achieve NIMS compliance. In order for the vision to be shared, the implementation for change cannot come from a centralized authority. It must be collaboratively developed with leaders that allow basic ideas to be open to discussion and revision. This process cannot be compulsory in an attempt to bring unity in NIMS compliance.

Training is essential for NBFR and the City of New Bern to be competent in their roles and responsibilities within NIMS. NBFR and other departments have trained as individual groups but have failed to perform as a unified team. Training exercises must be inclusive of all

entities within the city. Collaboration for implementing NIMS compliance that does not include the top leadership will be vacuous. Past large-scale events have found the city's leadership heavily involved in many incidents as single sources that work separately from other organizations. NBFR, police, and city leaders seem to be working on separate agendas while planning for an event. Leaders of local government need to become collaboratively involved, which will have develop confidence in the organizational structures, plans, and persons responding to the crisis. The involvement of NBFR and New Bern's top leadership in the collaborative process is absolutely essential. Familiarity with the process and persons involved will take the city from knowledge to understanding. Too often, training exercises have imposed standards and do not involve top leadership. NBFR and the entire city need to perform training exercises that reinforce the NIMS concepts for everyone's role and responsibility.

The author further recommends that NBFR and the City of New Bern appoint representatives from each department onto a committee that oversees community preparedness and NIMS compliance. The first goal of the committee should to bring unity among the city and to develop objectives for meeting NIMS compliance requirements. Efforts should then be placed on integrating the private sector and other non-governmental organizations into the NIMS compliance objectives.

Preparedness is the foundation for successful NIMS implementation. Responsibility for preparedness falls on all stakeholders in advance of an incident. All entities within local government must be involved in coordinating preparedness within New Bern's jurisdictional borders, as well as across geographical borders. Both local government and the community's stakeholders have a unique role in supporting the preparedness framework. This author recommends integrating the entire community into the NIMS planning process. Leaders of the

NBFR and local government must provide the necessary resources that support the incorporation of all organizations into NIMS training and exercises. The City of New Bern's leadership must be accountable for developing mechanisms that coordinate volunteers, goods, and services through organizations within the community. Community preparedness and participation by everyone is essential in complying with NIMS preparedness. Participation by all stakeholders within the city and community will build a structure and a process for ongoing collaboration for NIMS compliance.

Research has shown many issues within the current NIMS compliance requirements. New Bern like many other communities is being forced to meet standards that lack a clear guidance in defining the appropriate level of preparedness and setting priorities to achieve NIMS compliance. NBFR is a small combination fire department that depends on both career and volunteer emergency responders. In order to meet NIMS compliance requirements the fire department has imposed NIMS requirements and duties that discourage volunteer participation. Research has confirmed other organizations are struggling with NIMS compliance and now is the time to become an advocate for the smaller departments.

The final recommendation is for NBFR and the City of New Bern to become involved in NIMS compliance recommendations at the county, state, and federal level. Collaboration was found to be a significant recommendation in having NBFR and the City of New Bern understanding NIMS compliance. The leaders of the community, local government, and state need to utilize these same concepts and become advocates for changing the current standards into a standard that is achievable for the small organization. There is a need to have representation in the decisions for implementing NIMS. Each agency should have the ability to have direct contact with a government representative that knows the jurisdiction's area and needs for compliance.

Grants should be based on needs and not competition. Larger agencies have the ability to hire grant writers, while many departments lack the resources to compete for the funding.

A general recommendation for future readers is to determine the cause of their problem. Research has shown that many times what is thought to be the problem are merely symptoms generated by the source of the real problem. This author quickly realized the problem facing NBFR was much deeper than originally thought. Knowledge of one's role and responsibility is significant but does not necessarily mean there is understanding. More research is needed to clearly define the individual's organization and entire community's role and responsibility within NIMS. This will allow the knowledge of NIMS to become a resource for understanding. Having a fire department and the surrounding community prepared is without a doubt a very challenging venture. As a whole, NIMS is an enormous leap in overcoming these challenges but the system fails to recognize all organizations and jurisdictions are not equal. Failure to continue research in developing a system for compliance that encompasses the need of all departments will force many to become compliant on paper. NBFR and other fire departments should collaborate in efforts that bring consistency to NIMS compliance standards. The goal should be to have a system that focuses less on compliance timelines and focuses more on competence.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire: The National Incident Management System (NIMS)

Agency Name:

Name:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Job Title:

Department/Division:

Questions:

1. Please check the highest level of NIMS training you have received.

☐ IS-700 (National Incident Management System, an Introduction)
☐ IS-800 (National Response Plan, an Introduction)
☐ ICS-100 (Introduction to Incident Command System)
☐ ICS-200 (Basic Incident Command System)
☐ ICS-300 (Intermediate Incident Command System)
☐ ICS-400 (Advanced Incident Command System)
☐ Don't Know

2. Have you reviewed the compliance requirements for local government that are outlined in the National Incident Management System?

☐ Yes
☐ No

3. Please check any of the following that you see as applicable to local government in accordance to NIMS compliance.

☐ Adopt NIMS by ordinance
☐ Develop a compliance strategy for implementing NIMS
☐ Define roles and responsibility for community
☐ Conduct an assessment to determine status of compliance
☐ Update the local Emergency Management Plan
☐ Establish Mutual Aid Agreements with neighboring entities
☐ Integrate NIMS into all exercises and training

4. Please describe the roles, responsibilities, and procedures you see as being relevant to your position or department in becoming NIMS compliant (attach separate page if answer block is too small).

5. Briefly describe your role/position during a large-scale incident in accordance to NIMS ICS (attach separate page if answer block is too small).

6. Please check any of the following entities that should understand and be practicing NIMS within the local community.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Department | <input type="checkbox"/> Law Enforcement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Medical Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City Departmental Leaders | <input type="checkbox"/> Elected Officials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Schools | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Sector |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitals | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Department |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local Citizens | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-governmental Organizations (i.e. Red Cross, Churches) | |

Appendix B

Email Correspondence to NBFR and the City of New Bern

To: Department and Division Leaders,

As a participant in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program I am required to complete an applied research project. The emphasis of my research is to identify specific roles, responsibilities, and procedures needed to support NIMS compliance at all levels of local government. Another focus is to reveal any obstacles that other agencies have faced and their solutions to the problem with implementing NIMS.

In order to help with my endeavors, I would greatly appreciate your assistance in answering some prepared questions (see attachment) pertaining to my research. Once you have completed the questions send the results via my email (boydr@newbern-nc.org). Please provide any additional comments or suggestions that you perceive as being significant to my research. If you need to contact me by phone or want to talk to me face-to-face, please call me at 252-675-2997. I know you are very busy and any effort provided for this project is coveted. I will be glad to share anything about the project's results once completed.

Thanks,



Robert M. Boyd Jr.
Deputy Chief of Operations
New Bern Fire Rescue
252-639-2931

Appendix C

Questionnaire: National Incident Management System

Agency Name: _____

Contact Information:

Name:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

(Your contact information is voluntary for contact purposes and will not be used in the research paper)

Questions:

1. Which of the following most accurately describes your agency's function?

- ☐ Fire/Rescue
☐ Law Enforcement
☐ Emergency Medical Services
☐ Local Government
☐ Other (*Please Specify*) _____

2. Which of the following most accurately describes your agency and jurisdiction?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career | <input type="checkbox"/> Municipality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> County |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Combination | <input type="checkbox"/> Federal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

3. How many personnel engage in emergency response activities for your agency?

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <30 | <input type="checkbox"/> 151-200 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-50 | <input type="checkbox"/> 201-250 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 51-100 | <input type="checkbox"/> 251-300 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 101-150 | <input type="checkbox"/> >300 |

4. How many emergency calls does your department respond to annually?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <100 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3001-4000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 100-500 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4001-5000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 501-1000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5001-6000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1001-2000 | <input type="checkbox"/> 6001-7000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2001-3000 | <input type="checkbox"/> >7000 |

5. Has your agency reviewed the compliance requirements for local jurisdictions that are outlined in the National Incident Management System?

_____ Yes

_____ No

6. Has **your** agency or jurisdiction achieved the following NIMS requirements?

(Yes___ No___) Adopted NIMS by ordinance

(Yes___ No___) Developed a compliance strategy for implementing NIMS

(Yes___ No___) Defined roles and responsibility for agency and jurisdiction

(Yes___ No___) Conducted an assessment to determine status of compliance

(Yes___ No___) Updated the local Emergency Management Plan

(Yes___ No___) Established Mutual Aid Agreements with neighboring entities

(Yes___ No___) Integrated NIMS into all exercises and training

7. Please check the highest levels of NIMS **your** agency or jurisdiction have been trained in.

Agency

_____ IS-700 (National Incident Management System, an Introduction)

_____ IS-800 (National Response Plan, an Introduction)

_____ ICS-100 (Introduction to Incident Command System)

_____ ICS-200 (Basic Incident Command System)

_____ ICS-300 (Intermediate Incident Command System)

_____ ICS-400 (Advanced Incident Command System)

_____ None

_____ Don't Know

Law Enforcement

_____ IS-700 (National Incident Management System, an Introduction)

_____ IS-800 (National Response Plan, an Introduction)

_____ ICS-100 (Introduction to Incident Command System)

_____ ICS-200 (Basic Incident Command System)

_____ ICS-300 (Intermediate Incident Command System)

_____ ICS-400 (Advanced Incident Command System)

_____ None

_____ Don't Know

Emergency Medical Service

_____ IS-700 (National Incident Management System, an Introduction)

_____ IS-800 (National Response Plan, an Introduction)

_____ ICS-100 (Introduction to Incident Command System)

_____ ICS-200 (Basic Incident Command System)

_____ ICS-300 (Intermediate Incident Command System)

_____ ICS-400 (Advanced Incident Command System)

_____ None

_____ Don't Know

City/County Administration

- ☐ IS-700 (National Incident Management System, an Introduction)
- ☐ IS-800 (National Response Plan, an Introduction)
- ☐ ICS-100 (Introduction to Incident Command System)
- ☐ ICS-200 (Basic Incident Command System)
- ☐ ICS-300 (Intermediate Incident Command System)
- ☐ ICS-400 (Advanced Incident Command System)
- ☐ None
- ☐ Don't Know

City/County Board

- ☐ IS-700 (National Incident Management System, an Introduction)
- ☐ IS-800 (National Response Plan, an Introduction)
- ☐ ICS-100 (Introduction to Incident Command System)
- ☐ ICS-200 (Basic Incident Command System)
- ☐ ICS-300 (Intermediate Incident Command System)
- ☐ ICS-400 (Advanced Incident Command System)
- ☐ None
- ☐ Don't Know

8. Please describe any obstacles your agency or jurisdiction encountered in understanding the roles, responsibility, or procedures for implementing NIMS compliance.

9. Please describe any solutions your agency or jurisdiction utilized to overcome obstacles described in question 8

Appendix D

Email Correspondence to North Carolina Fire Chiefs

Chiefs,

My name is Robert Boyd, Deputy Chief of Operations for the City of New Bern Fire-Rescue Department. As a participant in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program I am required to complete an applied research project. The emphasis of my research is to identify specific roles, responsibilities, and procedures needed to support NIMS compliance at all levels of local government. Another focus is to reveal any obstacles that other agencies have been faced with and their solutions to the problem with implementing NIMS.

In order to help with my endeavors, I would greatly appreciate your assistance in answering some prepared questions (see attachment) pertaining to my research. Once you have completed the questions send the results via my email (boydr@newbern-nc.org). Please provide any additional comments or suggestions that you perceive as being significant to my research. If you need to contact me by phone or want to talk to me face-to-face, please call me at 252-675-2997. I know you are very busy and any effort provided for this project is coveted. I will be glad to share anything about the project's results once completed.

Thanks,



Robert M. Boyd Jr.
Deputy Chief of Operations
New Bern Fire Rescue
252-639-2931

Appendix E

Demographic Information from Questionnaire

10. Which of the following most accurately describes your agency's function?

Results are as follows:

Fire/Rescue	100%	(33 of 33)
-------------	------	------------

11. Which of the following most accurately describes your agency and jurisdiction?

Results are as follows:

Career	24%	(8 of 33)
Combination	61%	(20 of 33)
Volunteer	15%	(5 of 33)
Municipality	85%	(28 of 33)
County	15%	(5 of 33)

3. How many personnel engage in emergency response activities for your agency?

Results are as follows:

<30	3%	(1 of 33)
30-50	24%	(8 of 33)
51-100	51 %	(17 of 33)
101-150	12%	(4 of 33)
151-200	6%	(2 of 33)
>300	3%	(1 of 33)

12. How many emergency calls does your department respond to annually?

Results are as follows:

100-500	6%	(2 of 33)
501-1000	24%	(8 of 33)
1001-2000	28%	(9 of 33)
2001-3000	3%	(1 of 33)
4001-5000	12%	(4 of 33)
6001-7000	15%	(5 of 33)
>7000	12%	(4 of 33)